

ACJC General Paper
JC2 PRELIMINARY EXAM 2014
Paper 2 Comprehension Answer Scheme

1. Explain why the author disapproves of complying with positive thinking 'all the time' (line 1). **Use your own words as far as possible.** (1m)

<p>"I do not like being commanded to be positive – all the time and no matter the circumstances." (line 1) OR "Sometimes, smiles just are not what a situation demands." (line 2)</p>	<p>It is because, at certain times / moments / occasions, one is not required / expected to be happy / positive. OR It is because there are occasions when it is reasonable / justifiable for a person to have negative thoughts / feelings / to be upset / sad / angry. OR It is because positive thinking is not suitable / appropriate for every occasion. OR It is because positive thinking is not always suitable / appropriate.</p> <p>Note: Do not accept "all" and "circumstances". Cannot repeat the question.</p>
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2. According to the author, what contrasting perceptions do people have about optimists and pessimists as stated in lines 8-9? **Use your own words as far as possible.** (2m)

<p>"In every way, it seems, optimists bask in the sunshine of the world's approbation, ... (lines 7-8)</p>	<p>The perceptions that people have are optimists enjoy / like / relish / revel inthe approval / glory / praise (of everyone)</p>
<p>...while pessimists mope in the shadows (lines 8-9)"</p>	<p>while pessimists brood / sulk / wallowin misery / in self-pity / in depression / in negativity / all by themselves / in isolation / while being away from people.</p> <p>Note: both answers must have 2 parts. Do not accept: Optimists are happy. / Pessimists are depressed. (wrong because <i>bask</i> / <i>mope</i> are verbs)</p>

3. Explain how a 'targeted' use of optimism differs from its 'blanket' use (line 14). **Use your own words as far as possible.** (2m)

<p>(Such a targeted use of optimism...) ...mindsets we can adopt as needed (line 12) OR ...rose and blue tinted lenses we can put on or take off depending on the situation. (lines 12-13)</p>	<p>A targeted use of optimism is choosing / selecting to be optimistic as the scenarios / circumstances demand. OR perceiving things positively contingent on / subject to what is happening.</p> <p>Note: Can lift 'optimistic'</p>
<p>...blanket policy of all optimism, all the time (lines 14-15)</p>	<p>whereas a blanket use refers to adopting a standard / wholesale / general / default approach of being always or perpetually positive.</p> <p>Note: Cannot lift 'all'</p>

4. What does the phrase 'optimism's poor relative' (line 18) imply about pessimism? (2m)

Optimism's poor ... (line 18)	Pessimism is regarded as inferior to optimism or has a lowly status / has lower value than optimism / is seen in a bad light. <u>Wrong</u> : not as popular / not well liked / not preferred / not sought after
...relative , pessimism, is emerging from the shadows. (Line 18)	Pessimism and optimism are associated / interconnected / linked (as mindsets / mental states). Note: 'related' is a lift.

5. Why has the author placed the phrase "at least, not always" (line 31) inside brackets? (2m)

It turns out that optimism and pessimism are not distortions or flaws in our visions (at least, not always)... (lines 30-31)	<u>Function of brackets</u> : She wants to give additional information / include information that is not central to her argument / add a side comment
	<u>Explanation of "at least, not always"</u> : to clarify / qualify / to show that her claim may not be absolutely correct. / to show that there are exceptions OR ...to concede that / to accept the view that optimism and pessimism are sometimes distortions or flaws in our vision.

6. SUMMARY: ANSWER IS ON THE NEXT PAGE.

7. Explain why the author uses the word "surprisingly" in line 58. **Use your own words as far as possible.** (2m)

... Surprisingly , ...	The author wants to highlight that it is rather unusual / unexpected / ironic / paradoxical / not logical
...it can be most helpful at the moments when we might seem to have the least to feel pessimistic about. (line 58-59)	that pessimism is of the greatest assistance / aid / benefit... ...when we have the least reason / cause to be pessimistic. OR that pessimism is of the greatest assistance / aid / benefit... ...when we have the most reason to be optimistic. Note: Can lift 'most' and 'least'.

6. Using material from paragraphs 4-7, summarise the benefits of pessimism. Write your summary in **no more than 120 words**, not counting the opening words which are printed below. **Use your own words as far as possible.**

Pessimism is beneficial because... (8m)

No	Possible Points	No	Possible Paraphrase
1	Pessimism is functional (line 25)	1	Pessimism has many purposes / practical uses/ is useful. Or Pessimism can be used as a tool.
2	help us manage our expectations (lines 26 -27)	2	Pessimism aids us in dealing / coping with our hopes / desired outcomes / dreams / anticipated outcomes...
3	(<i>manage</i>)...our actions . (line 27)	3	...and what we do. OR ...and our deeds.
4	(Pessimism...)...are enhanced perspectives (line 31)	4	...pessimism gives us more sophisticated / profound / deeper / wiser viewpoints ...
5	...that give us something more than mere realism can provide (lines 31-32)	5	...which are more than simply seeing things as they are
6	...can act as powerful motivators , (line 33) OR There is nothing like a looming disaster to make us get things done (lines 37-38)	6	Pessimism is a very strong / potent... impetus / incentive.
7	Pessimism (<i>about a potential outcome</i>) can mobilise us to act with alacrity (line 37)	7	Pessimism makes us do things promptly / quickly / eagerly / with urgency
8	The emotional component of... pessimism (lines 38-39) OR ... bring feelings along with them... (lines 40 -41)	8	Pessimism contains / involves / has inherent... emotions / feelings/ sentiments ... <i>Note: Can lift emotions or feelings but not the entire phrase.</i>
9	those feelings push us into action more forcefully (line 41)	9	...which strongly / greatly / powerfully / with great intensity... ...compel / drive / spur / move us to act
10	than any rational prediction could (lines 41-42)	10	...more than any logical / objective... forecast / projection / estimate can.
11	...help us manage other emotions (line 44) OR Pessimism may seem like an odd choice as an emotional helpmeet (line 49) OR Assist us in managing our feelings (line 50)	11	Pessimism enables us to handle / control / cope with feelings / moods / sentiments... <i>Note: Can lift emotions or feelings but not the entire phrase.</i>
12	that might get in the way of our effectiveness (line 44)	12	that may hamper / hinder our success / efficiency / productivity
13	By spinning down our expectations ... (line 50)	13	By lowering / reducing our hopes / desired outcomes...
14	It insulates us from crushing disappointment ... (lines 50-51) OR You will not be nearly so affected emotionally (lines 54-55)	14	...pessimism protects / shields / safeguards us from debilitating / devastating / intense dissatisfaction / feelings of being let down / frustration / regret...
15	...when things do not go our way (line 50-51) OR ...when you lose out as you have predicted (54-55)	15	... <u>when</u> we experience failure / lack of success.
16	Pessimism is an ego-protection strategy. (lines 51-52) OR (Reverse) absorb a big blow to your self-image and self-esteem (line 53) OR ...our self-protective pessimism (line 56)	16	Pessimism preserves / safeguards our self-worth / self-confidence.
17	Pessimism can also permit a feeling of delighted relief when we do manage to get what we want. (lines 55-57)	17	Pessimism can result in a release of tension / sense of liberation when we achieve our goals.
18	Optimists never get the joy of a pleasant surprise . (line 57)	18	Pessimists enjoy happiness/ elation... ...when the unexpected happens. (must talk about pessimists not optimists)

No. of Points	1-2	3-4	5-6	7	8-9	10-11	12-13	14 - more
Marks	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8

8. Explain why the author thinks that people who engage in defensive pessimism cannot be labelled as 'sad-sack Eeyores' (line 65). **Use your own words as far as possible.** (3m)

... hardly fit the stereotype of sad-sack Eeyores moaning about the gloomy state of the world (lines 64-65) OR ...the potential catastrophes we conjure ... (lines 63-64)	Sad-sack Eeyores complain / lament about the problems / troubles around them. OR Sad-sack Eeyores just or only complain / lament about the problems / troubles around them, and do nothing.
"Defensive pessimism", involves imagining all the things that might go wrong in the future . (lines 62-63) OR ...the potential catastrophes we conjure ... (lines 63-64)	whereas those who engage in defensive pessimism predict / surmise / visualize / speculate / think about the negative things that may happen or predict / surmise / visualize / speculate / think about possible disasters / calamities / misfortunes...
Pessimism can give us the push that we need to try our best. (line 61) OR It spurs us to take action to head off...and prevent them from happening (line 63-64) OR They use the technique to motivate themselves to do the very best job they can. (line 67-68)	...and are driven / compelled / incentivised / pressured to take action... (*...to avert / block / preempt / anticipate / plan for disasters) (*Note: for a more complete answer - good to have but not compulsory)

9. In paragraph 10, what explanation does Barbara Ehrenreich offer for the problems America is facing? **Use your own words as far as possible.** (2m)

She blames the tyranny of positive thinking... (line 88)	The problems America is facing are due to the enforced ideology / mindset of optimism. OR Americans are forced / compelled to think optimistically.
...the nation's reckless optimism (line 88) OR ...heralded the rethinking of mindless optimism (lines 84 -85)	Americans foolishly / carelessly / rashly / thoughtlessly believe that everything will turn out well. OR Americans have unrealistic expectations / hope too much for the best / too fixated on positive thinking.

10. Suggest one reason for the author ending the passage with the phrase "smiley face not required" (lines 92-3). (1m)

A wiser aim is to find the most effective way to propel where we want to go. Both optimism and pessimism can help us get there – smiley face not required . (lines 91-93)	The phrase forms a succinct / concise summation / summary of the contents of the passage that optimism is not always needed. OR The author uses the smiley face (which is a symbol of optimism) to reiterate / emphasise his point that optimism is not always necessary. OR The author wants to emphasise his point that optimism is not always necessary in a tongue-in-cheek manner. OR The author wants to end his essay with a "smiley face" because it is a commonly used symbol to end messages nowadays. OR It recapitulates / echoes / links back to the introduction where the author states that 'smiles are not what a situation demands'.
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11. Annie Paul explores the changing perceptions towards both optimism and pessimism. How applicable are the ideas raised by the author to you and your society? (10m)
Justify your answer with ideas from the passage and your knowledge of your own society.

Requirement:

Students should -

- a) explain how optimism and pessimism can be viewed differently from prevailing views
- b) describe the uses and problems of being optimistic and pessimistic
- c) show understanding and engage with the ideas and views raised in the passage
- d) support their views with relevant examples from their own society

Explanation:

Discuss some of the following in relation to their own society

- a) the positive perception and value of optimism
- b) the stigma associated with pessimism
- c) the changing perceptions of optimism and pessimism
- d) adopting a flexible approach in our response to different situations
- e) functions and benefits of both optimism and pessimism – motivate people powerfully, help to manage emotions, pre-empt and deal with potential problems
- f) functions and benefits of pessimism – help us to manage our expectations, protect our ego and deal with uncertainty
- g) detriments of being overly optimistic

Evaluation:

- a) question/show reasons for subscribing/not subscribing to the author's ideas
- b) insightful analysis of the changing perceptions towards and the reasons why people would want to adopt these mindsets
- c) critically evaluate the functions and benefits of both optimism and pessimism
- d) cogent development of arguments
- e) give examples from their own society to support their views

Coherence:

- a) adopt a consistent viewpoint
- b) argue logically
- c) organise answers into cohesive, themed paragraphs
- d) link paragraphs to show continuity and direction of argument
- e) maintain relevance to the task in everything they write
- f) end with a summative or concluding paragraph/ sentence

11. Annie Paul explores the changing perceptions towards both optimism and pessimism. How applicable are the ideas raised by the author to you and your society? Justify your answer with ideas from the passage and your knowledge of your own society.

Para	References (Key Ideas)	Guiding Questions/ Discussion Issues	This view of pessimism / optimism is applicable to my society.	This view of pessimism / optimism is not applicable to my society.
1	“Sometimes, smiles just are not what a situation demands.” (Line 2)	Are you and your society always optimistic regardless of the situation? What are the circumstances in which you and society would not be optimistic?	The author suggests that optimism is not always the appropriate approach for every situation. There are times when people need to know the harsh truth, which should not be sugar-coated. At times, being brutally honest is more beneficial. In Singapore, every succeeding generation has had to face tougher challenges. As such, parents take every opportunity to remind their children that it is likely that competition for jobs will be more intense in the future. Although seemingly cruel, the truth is told to allow students to know that tough challenges lie ahead. As this concerns their future livelihood, it should not be taken lightly (with “a smile”). Reckless optimism will cause them to underestimate the challenges ahead. As a result, students are constantly pressured to do well and told to avoid having false hopes.	There are situations where being positive is simply the default approach all the time. In Singapore, teachers are encouraged to always believe in the potential of every student. Even when the child is seen to be struggling and unlikely to succeed academically, teachers do not give up on him and attempt to help him find his niche in life. This is due to the teachers’ genuine concern for the welfare of the children, as well as their recognition of the worth of every individual. Furthermore, in Singapore, because we need to maximise our human capital, the Ministry of Education instructs teachers to do their utmost to ensure that the full potential of their charges, even for those who are not academically inclined, is realised, such as through CCA. Therefore, teachers are persistently optimistic about their students, regardless of their current shortcomings.
1 & 3	“In every way, it seems, optimists bask in the sunshine of the world’s approbation, while pessimists mope in the shadows.” (Lines 7-9) “Optimism’s poor relative, pessimism, is emerging from the shadows.” (Line 18) “...pessimism comes with a deep stigma.” (Lines 18-19)	How are optimistic and pessimistic people viewed in your society? Do optimists enjoy praise as much as the passage suggests? Are pessimists shunned as the passage suggests?	The author states that optimists are well received by all around them whilst pessimists are not given as much attention. In Singapore too, optimists are seen to exude positive feelings, confidence and charisma whilst pessimists are seen as withdrawn and introverted. At work, optimists enjoy more “visibility” and also more tangible and intangible rewards whilst pessimists are side-lined. This is particularly pertinent in Singapore as the nature of work is becoming increasingly collaborative due to the focus on projects-based work that is the mainstay of knowledge-based industries. As such, pessimists are mis-fits as they are regarded as ineffective team players.	Optimistic people may not necessarily be well-liked in all instances. Optimists always see the glass as half full and as such, they concentrate only on the positive aspects, ignoring the negative ones. When these people impose their optimism on others, they may come across as unsympathetic and lacking empathy. For example, the Singapore government commonly reminds its citizens that their problems are “First World problems”, suggesting that their complaints are trivial and unreasonable. However, in the eyes of the citizens, issues such as rising inflation and the increasing cost of living are serious matters requiring attention and action from the government. Thus, labelling these concerns as trivial and unreasonable makes the government appear insensitive and unsympathetic.

		<p>Has there been a change in the perception of pessimism?</p> <p>Why is there a change in the perception of pessimism in your society?</p>	<p>Pessimism has always carried a stigma with it but that is slowly changing. Singaporeans are less happy and hopeful about their future given the changing global conditions that also affect Singapore. These changing conditions include the increasing interconnectivity of the world economy which makes our economy more subject to local and global competition. As such, people are becoming more pessimistic about their career prospects. As more and more people feel the effects of such changes, there is a certain amount of reinforcement and fellow commiseration of the idea about a tough future ahead. As more people feel that this view is true, it has gained widespread acceptance.</p>	<p>Although pessimism is becoming a more mainstream mindset, it does not mean that it is accepted by all in society. Pessimistic young Singaporeans who complain incessantly are criticised by the government and the older generation as being “soft”. Even though the reasons for being pessimistic are justified, being pessimistic about the future is seen as an unacceptable outlook. This is because the older generation feels that they had to put up with far greater challenges in their time. As such, the older generation sees the young today as the strawberry generation who are unable to take on what they feel are small and insignificant challenges.</p>
3 & 4	<p>“Successful people often employ pessimism in a strategic way to motivate and prepare themselves for the future.” (Lines 21-22)</p> <p>“It turns out that optimism and pessimism are not distortions or flaws in our vision (at least, not always), but in fact are enhanced perspectives that give us something more than mere realism can provide.” (Lines 30-32)</p>	<p>Does pessimism motivate you and your society effectively?</p>	<p>Pessimism can help to add additional drive to push students to excel in their studies. The situation in Singapore is such that degrees are becoming the norm rather than an advantage for future employment. Students today see success and the path to success as increasingly difficult and unattainable. Despite having such a gloomy future ahead for students, it is the pessimism that has spurred them into performing better in schools. They know that not doing well academically is not an option. Hence, many students strive to meet what they see as the minimum requirement for a decent job in the future. This is due to the fact that Singapore is an extremely competitive society. It is because of such competition that everyone strives to attain a university degree, making it into a necessity rather than an advantage.</p>	<p>In Singapore, there are some students who have suffered as a result of pessimism and are unable to use their pessimism to motivate themselves. The Normal Technical students in the secondary schools are usually stigmatised to the point that they feel that there is no hope for them to try to succeed. Their only option is the Institute of Technical Education (ITE) which is also pessimistically labelled as, “It’s The End”. The over-emphasis on the paper chase in Singapore has meant that students who are not able to perform well academically are seen as failures and incompetent. Thus, pessimism has become a self-fulfilling prophecy.</p>

5	<p>“...the energising force of optimism can convince you it will work out, just long enough to turn that prediction into a reality” (Lines 35-36)</p>	<p>What are the implications for your society if everyone assumes that everything will turn out well?</p> <p>How do these implications affect you and your society?</p>	<p>Even though Singapore’s government has always been very cautious about embarking on major economic restructuring, and has always weighed the risks carefully. Yet, it took the chance and embarked on the creation of hubs for knowledge-based industries, surmising that this would be the next big growth area. This was due to the government’s optimistic outlook regarding the promise of huge returns if the ventures succeeded. Such projects were laden with many risks and failure would have meant great financial loss and damage to Singapore’s reputation. But Singapore took the leap of faith and is now one of the most sought after places for innovation and research. Singapore has no choice but to take certain risks so as to remain competitive in the global arena.</p>	<p>Optimism may blind us to the risks and problems of projects. While not all risks and problems would occur, some might. Singapore’s government underestimated the problems that came with the building of the two casinos. The two casinos were meant to spur the economy but they also led to compulsive gambling and the growth of unlicensed money lenders in Singapore. Despite the optimistic belief in the power of regulations, the entrance fee did not deter locals from patronising the casinos. Had the government been less optimistic in its belief that the problems would be insignificant, it may have reconsidered the building of the casinos. The government’s priority on growth means that the economic benefits of the casino are seen as more important compared to the negative impact.</p>
6	<p>“Pessimism can assist us in managing our feelings. By spinning down our expectations, it insulates us from crushing disappointment when things do not go our way.” (line 50-53)</p>	<p>Is it advisable for you and your society to lower expectations?</p> <p>How will lower expectations be beneficial or detrimental to you and your society?</p>	<p>Pessimism can help us manage our expectations in many areas of our lives. If people adopt a pessimistic attitude and lower their expectations, they will be able to accept poor results or failures better. In Singapore, we lower our expectations with regard to the achievements of our national athletes and teams in the international arena. Rather than getting emotionally devastated when they fail to win, Singaporeans are typically less affected and not emotionally devastated because they do not expect the competitors to win in the first place. Such an approach enables Singaporean spectators to brush off such disappointments or failures, and still look forward to cheering at the next competition. This mindset also allows the athletes and teams to keep their hopes alive and persevere to do better the next time.</p>	<p>Pessimism may not be able to protect us from disappointment. Even when we have low expectations, we will still feel terrible when outcomes do not go our way; for there is no comfort when our low expectations are fulfilled. Singapore is ranked as one of the unhappiest countries in the world – a better attitude to adopt would be to look on the bright side instead. Pessimism and lower expectations can lead to self-fulfilling prophecies and a downward spiral. We fear the worst, and end up subconsciously taking actions to make them come true. This is counter-productive.</p>

7	<p>"Pessimism can also permit a feeling of delighted relief when, despite our self-protective pessimism, we do manage to get what we want." (Lines 55-57)</p>	<p>Is self-protective pessimism beneficial or harmful to you and your society?</p>	<p>In our Asian culture, Singaporeans often self-denigrate and assume a humble posture, such that we try to avoid overstating our abilities and ambitions, and downplay our potential for success. This creates better social cohesion and group integration and to insulate ourselves from failure. For if we boast or hope for a lot but end up failing, we would lose 'face'. As such, we prefer to be pessimistic, and will bask in the praise of others only when we actually succeed. This promotes cohesion and protects our pride.</p>	<p>It is considered unbecoming of a person to be too self-protective, and predict the worst so as to gain relief if the worst does not happen. This will lead to lower standards of achievement, be it in the workplace or classroom. This will not be good for Singapore. It is only by holding ourselves to the highest standards that we can continue to improve our nation's quality of life. Also, we will never mature if we engage in self-protective pessimism. We ought to be more optimistic instead.</p>
8	<p>""Defensive pessimism" involves imagining all the things that might go wrong in the future. It spurs us to take action to head off the potential catastrophes we conjure and prevent them from happening." (lines 62-64)</p>	<p>In what ways does your society engage in "defensive pessimism" and why?</p> <p>What are the short / long term effects of engaging in it?</p>	<p>Our government believes in following a political philosophy of a "siege mentality", given our national history (rough road to independence and separation from Malaysia) and geopolitical reality of being a "tiny red dot". We believe ourselves to be extremely vulnerable to global shocks, where our hard-earned prosperity and peace could be eradicated in a single swoop if we do not remain vigilant. This has helped to cope well with economic crises. E.g. 1997 currency crisis and 2008 financial crisis. We have survived many crises without suffering too much, for example there was minimal loss of jobs during the economic crises.</p>	<p>Defensive pessimism can create undue fear, potential panic and an unhealthy social atmosphere of restriction, stifling people with the constant worry that things will go badly. It can also incite overreaction to the slightest incidents that may turn out to be nothing. In addition, it can lead to unnecessary expenditure of money, efforts and energy for imagined problems that do not really exist. E.g. defensive pessimism led to overreaction to racist blog comments. The punishment exceeded the crime as the bloggers were jailed for what many saw as a minor offence.</p> <p>Long term consequences of the government adopting defensive pessimism include a perpetual dissatisfaction with life, heightened anxiety and having to live in a tightly regulated and controlled society with few freedoms, as well as a sanitised, even depersonalised environment.</p>

9	<p>"Pessimism can also be an effective motivator when we are faced with an overwhelming or amorphous fear..." (lines 69-70)</p> <p>"...prompt us to take the necessary steps that we would otherwise avoid." (lines 70-71)</p> <p>"Pessimism is not a lamentable drain on our time and energy but a productive strategy for dealing with uncertainty." (lines 74)</p>	<p>What sorts of fears and uncertainties does your society face?</p> <p>How can pessimism help your society take preemptive measures which may seem initially unpalatable?</p>	<p>At a time when the nation has enjoyed many years of prosperity and wealth, there are many uncertainties about how the nation should continue to progress in the future: E.g. falling birth rate, the subsequent ageing population, migration and foreign worker issues, and the increasing liberalisation of social values, and demands for human rights and freedoms.</p> <p>A pessimistic-pragmatic approach would entail imagining the worst case scenario and then taking action, even extreme measures which can inconvenience people or deprive them of what they desire. Being a small, vulnerable nation with few natural resources, it is imperative for Singapore to always adopt such a mindset, because we are highly susceptible to the world economy, and national cohesion is fragile, owing to a less than strong national identity.</p> <p>E.g. To deal with an extremely low birth rate which would lead to a rapidly ageing population, Singapore opened its doors, allowing in a great influx of foreigners to migrate and settle here. A White Paper was also published which proposed the continuation of this process, to increase our population to 7 million, in spite of vehement complaints that we are becoming overcrowded.</p>	<p>Pessimism can be effective but it is not the psychological mindset Singapore needs right now given its history. Thinking about the worst outcomes and taking the hard steps to bite the bullet and work hard to avoid what we fear is an attitude we have adopted since our independence. In 1965, we were a tiny nation with no natural resources and no economic hinterland and we feared for our future. After so long, without respite, this has drained the collective spirit and emotional energy of the people.</p> <p>Singaporeans adopted "Kiasu-ism" (the fear of losing) and the government and businesses embraced pragmatism (akin to defensive pessimism) to deal with the uncertainties. These mindsets have served us well for the past 50 years but have begun to take their toll. Singaporeans are weary and ready for change, as evidenced by our many complaints about overcrowding, etc and the high level of disgruntlement with the ruling PAP party.</p> <p>We need to adopt a more positive outlook as well as a brighter hope for tomorrow, rather than live with such a negative mindset which brings little peace and pride. Having achieved First World status and becoming one of the most prosperous countries in the world, we should be allowed to rest on our laurels a bit, rather than constantly live in fear of failure.</p>
10	<p>"Appreciating the value of pessimism and the careful, restrained use of optimism seem consonant with the sometimes painful downward ratcheting of expectations we are collectively undergoing." (lines 82-84)</p>	<p>How can we balance the utilisation of optimism with the value of pessimism in your society?</p>	<p>Students / young people need to become less idealistic about the opportunities out there and be pessimistically aware that life is not easy, in spite of the promises of meritocracy. Succeeding in our education system only opens doors, but does not guarantee a cosy life thereafter. They should never take the perks they enjoy for granted, and realise that no one owes them a living. Yet, they should also make full use of their youth, energy and exuberance by adopting a measured use of optimism with realistic pessimism, combining the best of both perspectives to achieve the best for themselves and the nation.</p>	<p>Balancing pessimism and optimism is hard to do as it is difficult to know which perspective to apply to the situations around us, especially in our complex society, where there are no easy answers. Singapore is a major economic hub regionally and globally, but it is not easy to make business decisions. It often comes down to one adopting a wholesale approach that suits one best. Daring to take big risks (a type of optimism) can pay off well, and this is easier to adopt as a consistent business philosophy rather than having to always try too hard to find the perfect balance in an unclear situation.</p>